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ABSTRACT

This guide provides information to help program planners meet the challenges of communicating effectively with Hispanic/Latino audiences. It is important that any communication programs and materials designed for Hispanic and Latino audiences with substance abuse problem prevention messages be based on proven health communication principles, reflect and respond to cultural diversity, and attain cultural competence. The following steps should be taken: (1) research the problem; (2) define the audience; (3) develop a relevant message; (4) draw on lessons learned from national programs; (5) determine the form materials should take; (6) use appropriate language; (7) plan ways to put the materials into the community; and (7) evaluate the effectiveness of messages and materials. (Contains 20 references.) (SLD)

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Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

Technical Assistance Bulletin

Developing Effective Messages and Materials for Hispanic/Latino Audiences

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Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

Technical Assistance Bulletin

Developing Effective Messages and Materials for Hispanic/Latino Audiences

Hispanics/Latinos in the United States are a heterogeneous, complex population with rich internal diversity. They constitute a multicultural community that is the product of an ongoing process of simultaneous migration from many different countries, including Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Spain as well as Central American and other Spanish-speaking Latin American nations. This process of migration, which has lasted for decades, presumably will last for decades more.

Special thanks to Amelie G. Ramirez, Dr.P.H., and Miguel Baraona, major contributors to the writing of this document.

As indicated by the 1990 Census, the Hispanic/Latino community is experiencing a fast demographic expansion—six times faster than the general U.S. population. It is not only the fastest growing ethnic population in the United States but also the youngest. By the year 2000, Hispanics/Latinos will make up nearly 11 percent of the population, with an increasingly large segment of youth. Rapid demographic growth has been accompanied by positive educational and economic achievements as well as by a surge in social problems affecting the Hispanic/Latino community.

Numerous studies indicate that substance use among Hispanics/Latinos in the United States is increasing, particularly among youth. This presents new challenges and needs for prevention of substance abuse problems among a rapidly growing, changing, and diverse population.

Creative and innovative communication materials and strategies are needed. How can substance abuse prevention education and public information initiatives be developed to accommodate the numerous internal distinctions that exist within the Hispanic/Latino community? How can effective communication occur within a community that is neither linguistically nor culturally homogeneous? How can specific strategies and approaches be identified to reach a population that includes subgroups with cultural, racial, religious, ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic differences?

This bulletin provides information to help program planners meet the challenges of communicating effectively with Hispanic/Latino audiences.

US DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Center for Substance Abuse Prevention

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U.S. Hispanics/Latinos at a Glance

Population: At 24 million, this is the fastest growing population sector in the United States. Hispanics/Latinos are estimated to become the country's largest minority group by the year 2000.

Age: Hispanics/Latinos are younger than the national average with one in three presently under age 15. In the general population, this proportion is one in five.

Citizenship: Approximately 60 percent of Hispanics/Latinos living in this country are U.S. citizens.

Income: More than 70 percent of Hispanic/Latino families live above the poverty line, although 4 of every 10 Hispanic/Latino children remain impoverished.

Health insurance: Hispanics/Latinos constitute the most highly employed minority. Almost two-thirds of Hispanic/Latinos are covered by health insurance, but more than one-third are without basic coverage.

Education: Hispanics/Latinos are making progress in educational attainment yet remain the population segment with the lowest average educational level.

Language: Nearly 95 percent of Hispanics/Latinos consider it very important to maintain their language and culture. Almost 70 percent of Hispanics/Latinos over age 5 still speak Spanish at home.

Health status: The Hispanic/Latino population has a life expectancy approximately 3 years longer than the total population (79.1 for Hispanics/Latinos; 75.4 for the total population in 1990). Health status trends indicate improvements in infant mortality rates among certain Hispanic/Latino subgroups, lower smoking prevalence rates among adults, and increases in breast and cervical cancer screenings among women. Key areas of health concern for Hispanics/Latinos include preventing diabetes, adolescent pregnancy, tuberculosis, HIV infection, violence, and obesity as well as increasing access to primary health care services.

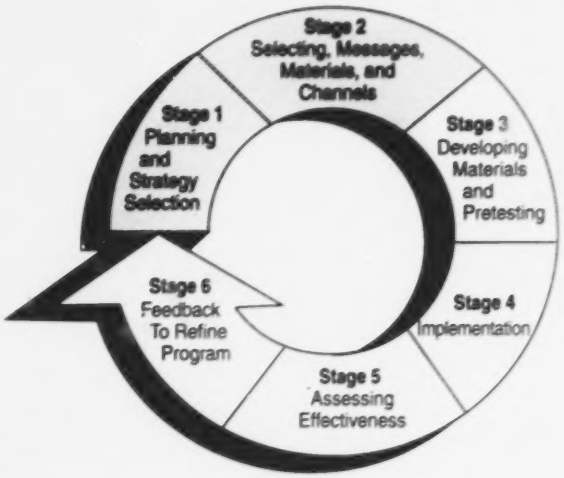
Sources: 1990 U.S. Census; U.S. DHHS's 1992 and 1993 *National Household Surveys on Drug Abuse*; TODOS's 1993, *Recommendations to the Surgeon General To Improve Hispanic/Latino Health*.

Follow the Health Communication Process

It is important that any communication programs and materials designed to reach Hispanic/Latino audiences with substance abuse problem prevention messages are based on proven health communication principles, reflect and respond to cultural diversity, and attain cultural competence. These principles are embodied in the six-stages of the health communication process: planning and strategy selection, selecting messages, materials, and channels, developing materials and pretesting, implementation, assessing effectiveness, and feedback to refine the program. Cycling and recycling through the stages will also help ensure cultural competence through the application of academic and interpersonal skills that allow for an increased understanding and appreciation of cultural differences and similarities within, among, and between groups. Note that achieving cultural competence requires a willingness and ability to draw on community-based values and traditions, and to work with knowledgeable persons from the targeted community or

The Health Communication Process

1. Planning and Strategy Selection
2. Selecting Messages, Materials, and Channels
3. Developing Materials and Pretesting
4. Implementation
5. Assessing Effectiveness
6. Feedback To Refine Program



population in developing strategies, messages, and materials.

Research the Problem

Begin the health communication planning process with research to ensure that efforts to reach the target population have an impact on the substance abuse problems that are addressed.

Gather information about the Hispanic/Latino population from many sources. Review the literature on the target audience. Identify national, regional, and local studies that can help explain the health, social, and other risk factors related to the substance abuse problems in the Hispanic/Latino community. Identify any gaps in information. If necessary, gather new data about the segment of the population that the prevention messages are intended to reach.

Involve prevention experts, opinion leaders, and other influential individuals in the Hispanic/Latino community to help identify the problem and the target audience segments for the prevention program. Talk with members of the target audience. Involve them in discussions about substance-abuse-related concerns, needs, and issues. Ask them how they obtain information, what they see as the barriers to communicating about substance abuse problem prevention, and what factors make receiving and acting on prevention messages easier.

Define the Audience

When program planners simply target "the Hispanic/Latino community," their efforts may fail. Instead their research should make it possible to target specific segments of this community for prevention messages. Remember that the more specific the segment of the community targeted, the more successfully the target audience can be reached.

To develop a profile of the target audience, consider factors such as:

- Age and gender
- Geographic location
- Educational attainment
- Socioeconomic level

- Health status
- Religious practices
- Knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors related to substance abuse
- Cultural norms and values
- Channels of communication
- Reasons for immigration and immigration status
- Degree of acculturation
- Intergenerational issues
- Literacy levels.

There are many ways of segmenting the Hispanic/Latino community. For example, a substance abuse problem prevention program could be targeted to:

- Hispanic/Latino community leaders or Spanish-language news media
- Hispanic/Latino subgroups (e.g., recent, Mexican American immigrants, Cuban American adolescent males)
- Low-income Hispanic/Latino women, 18 to 25 years old, at risk for substance abuse
- Hispanic/Latino youth ages 9 to 13, and their families (an audience that has achieved even greater importance with today's rapidly changing youth culture)
- Spanish-speaking migrant farmworker populations.

Develop a Relevant Message

To reach and have a significant impact on Hispanic/Latino audiences, develop an appropriate and culturally relevant message that is based on thorough knowledge and understanding of the audience and the community. Given the diversity of the Hispanic/Latino community, regional and local research is essential to the development of prevention messages.

Work With Community Leaders

Community gatekeepers (e.g., health care providers, chamber of commerce members, public personalities, leaders in daily contact with the community) can help explain local conditions and issues, which can vary widely depending on local problems, perceptions, assets, and resources. They can also help develop messages and materials that will be successful in reaching specific segments of the Hispanic/Latino community. Research and direct consultation with members of the target audiences and with those who can reach and influence them are necessary to establish the content of messages and the form of materials.

Involve the Target Audience

Testing assumptions and ideas for specific prevention messages, formats, and languages to use by involving members of the target audience in discussions is essential. Obtain their reactions to ideas, sketches, scripts, and other materials in development. Coordinate with local projects and agencies that are producing materials for the Hispanic/Latino community. Close cooperation and an exchange of materials and experiences can improve understanding of the audience and result in more targeted and effective prevention messages and materials.

In addition to developing targeted and relevant messages that appeal to specific segments of the Hispanic/Latino community, producing prevention materials that express basic messages using global images and icons that have meaning for all Hispanics/Latinos is also important. Efforts to discover commonalities linking the daily life experiences of Hispanic/Latino people living in different geographical areas and under different local conditions may broaden the reach of prevention messages. Such efforts may also be cost-effective.

Four Communication Programs Targeting Hispanics/Latinos*

1. **The Inside Story Project**

   University of New Mexico School of Medicine, Albuquerque, NM

   Target audience: Low-income, Hispanic/Latino women, 18 to 25 years old, at risk for substance use

   Project focus: Discourages the use of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs during pregnancy through audio and visual prevention materials.

2. **La Esperanza del Valle Project**

   University of Washington, Yakima Valley, Granger, WA

   Target audience: Mexican American migrant farmworkers

   Project focus: Promotes substance abuse education and prevention through telenovelas, radionovelas, and fotonovelas (soap operas for television, radio, and print media).

3. **The Substance Abuse and Media Project**

   University of Arizona Rural Health Office, Somerton and Nogales, AZ

   Target audience: Young people

   Project focus: Teaches students skills they need to prepare messages on drug use prevention for other youth like themselves.

4. **The ¡Mirame! Look at Me! Project**

   University of Texas Health Science Center, San Antonio, TX

   Target audience: Young Hispanics/ Latinos ages 9 to 13

   Project focus: Teaches young people the life skills they need to avoid alcohol, tobacco, and drugs, through use of a video-based curriculum.

*Funded by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Lessons Learned from National Programs

The following recommendations reflect lessons learned from national campaigns and communication programs that have targeted Hispanics/Latinos:

- Always avoid stereotypes.
- Promote respect for elders and promote interest in disappearing traditions.
- Listen to and respect youth and promote this attitude among Hispanic/Latino parents.
- Facilitate sharing and discussion of experiences.
- Build on the strengths of the Hispanic/ Latino community and its cultural values.
- Promote the importance of extended kinship (grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins) in family relations. Also promote nonfamily forms of close integration between individuals, such as "compadrazgo" (a person who supports you as a friend; could be similar to a child's godparents) and friendship.

- Promote communal values and neighborly attitudes such as "barrio" (specific area in the community and/or neighborhood) fiestas and traditions; and in general support all forms of extended social networking that are central to Hispanic/Latino culture.
- Encourage general civic values, but also support all practices and events that promote ethnic cultural pride and higher self-esteem among Hispanics/Latinos.
- Praise and use as role models particular contemporary and historical heroes and figures who are of specific significance for each Hispanic/Latino subgroup.
- Highlight Hispanic/Latino contributions in the development of the American nation and in the emergence of world civilization.

Determine the Form Materials Should Take

Even if a message is developed and has a target population well motivated and interested in the type of material and information to be disseminated, this alone may not be sufficiently powerful to ensure success. Always keep in mind:

- Form should not be considered secondary to content. If the message is not presented in a form (style, vocabulary, voice, story line) that is clear and attractive, the content (concepts, values, perspective) of the materials may be misunderstood or simply disregarded.

  An appealing form enhances the content of messages.
- Materials should be informative as well as appealing. If materials are simply attractive and entertaining without being truly educational, they will not help to achieve program goals.
- Modern culture is increasingly influenced by television and other visual media. Visual images also offer a good opportunity to reverse stereotypes.
- Identify appropriate visual images and cultural symbols. During developmental stages and before launching visual materials, use working groups as well as focus groups to pretest the materials.
- Good humor and jokes can be used successfully in visual images to communicate serious messages. In fact, cartoons are often a powerful form for delivering prevention messages. But care must be taken to use humor in a way that is appropriate and sensitive to the cultural context.

Use Appropriate Language

Because Hispanics/Latinos constitute an essentially bilingual community, issues of linguistic competence and language use are of prime importance for those involved in prevention aimed at this sector of the U.S. population.

All English, All Spanish, or Bilingual?

There is no universal answer. Some communicators feel that all documents should be bilingual. Others argue that strategic market segmentation is a more effective strategy for distribution. Here are some guidelines:

- Adapt materials to better fit the needs and specificities of Hispanics/Latinos. Develop and write the text in both English and Spanish for bilingual materials. Do not rely on translations of the English text.
- Consider providing both English and Spanish texts in one document. Cut the length of written English materials by half so that there is room to write it in both languages.

- Look for alternatives to print materials; use oral messages in both languages whenever possible.
- Write messages in English clearly and simply for readers who are just learning the language.

Remember that the language level of new immigrants is usually unknown, which makes it difficult to know how best to target this population. Research in this area is needed to establish more realistic programs with regard to the use of Spanish and English in materials for Hispanics/Latinos.

Readability

What should be done if audience members speak mainly Spanish but do not read it? What if they read both English and Spanish but are truly literate in neither?
Here are some strategies for enhancing readability:

- Use readability formulas, such as the SMOG formula or Gunning's Fog index.
- Develop materials at the appropriate literacy level of the audience.
- Make written materials as brief and clear as possible.
- Keep the use of technical jargon to a minimum.
- Accompany written material with good visual material. Ideally, the reader should be able to draw meaning from every picture.
- Explore images and symbols that communicate pan-Hispanic/Latino concepts. Some of these can be global cultural icons derived from nature, food, and celebrations.
- Use a type size large enough to be easily read.

Hispanic or Latino?

When is it appropriate to use which term, and when should both be used? For national materials, such as this bulletin, the combination "Hispanic/Latino" is probably the most appropriate and acceptable term. But realize that this practice may not be as effective at the local level. If materials are aimed at a local audience, carry out research locally to determine with which identity, which term, people feel more comfortable. Another viable way of referring to people is by the language they speak (e.g., Spanish-speaking people, Navajo-speaking people). A good working principle: Be as specific as possible to reach the majority of the target audience.

Colloquialisms

In general, many factors determine the different contexts in which either colloquialisms or formal Spanish may be used. If a targeted group constitutes a very wide audience (State and national levels), Spanish messages should be more formal and standard.

Although there seems to be no consensus on whether colloquialisms should be used, many professionals oppose their use, both in written and oral materials. Common voices are difficult to achieve given the wide variety of Spanish colloquialisms used among Hispanics/Latinos. Common wisdom suggests that it is best to approach each case separately without attempting to apply a formula mechanically. Ask members of the target group about specific local or regional dialect expressions that may be used in more informal conversations.

Examples of colloquialisms:

Regional examples: "troka" (truck), "parkear" (parking), "carpeta" (carpet), "marketa" (market), "bueno bye" (good bye)

Reasons to use colloquialisms:

- Careful use of certain colloquialisms makes verbal messages more realistic and thus more credible.

- Certain colloquialisms, such as terms of endearment, may be more universal/or useful.
- Colloquialisms can be more freely used when they are part of a local message intended for a local audience.

Reasons to avoid using colloquialisms:

- Many Hispanic/Latino audiences consider colloquial language derogatory.
- Colloquialisms tend to stress differences among Hispanics/Latinos rather than emphasize linguistic and cultural commonalties.
- When using colloquialisms, be careful not to use them in a way that reinforces stereotypes sometimes used in the mainstream media to depict Hispanics/Latinos.

Plan Ways To Put Materials Into the Community

To get messages across and to promote and distribute materials successfully, choose appropriate channels of communication and methods of outreach to the target audience. Strategies for planning successful outreach activities to Hispanic/Latino groups include the following:

- Plan and design the outreach process carefully, making sure local leaders and gatekeepers are involved.
- Promote and make good use of the positive family and communal values that are central to traditional Hispanic/Latino culture.
- Respect local and generational characteristics, but place special emphasis on promoting those basic historical and cultural foundations that unite all Hispanics/Latinos. Take advantage of the links that bind the individual to the family, the family to the community, and the community to the country.

Appropriate Methods of Outreach

Outreach methods and procedures should be tailored to cultural and generational differences. To ensure that messages get out to the Hispanic/Latino audience

- Learn who the real leaders and gatekeepers of the community are, gain their support, and get them to work collaboratively. Then, let local leaders and gatekeepers speak for and to their local communities.
- Use creative strategies to involve local leaders and target audiences. For example, in certain cases, men can be the channel for reaching women, other relatives, and peers.
- Work with organizations/institutions with programs that focus on family in implementing the outreach process. For example, clinics, day care centers, and women's organizations can be of great value for outreach purposes.
- Consider seriously organizations used by the general population, such as churches and hospitals. However, churches and hospitals are not always good intermediaries. It depends on local conditions that can vary greatly from one location or community to another.
- Include viable intermediaries and gatekeepers such as teachers, pharmacies, recreation and civic associations, fiestas, coaches, sport teams, corporate leaders, the media, health care providers, lay folk healers "curanderos," and Hispanic/Latino elected officials.
- Use mass communication media, including television, radio, VCRs, CDs, newspapers, and magazines.
- Use community access television and interactive technology as an outreach tool.
- Work with "promotoras." These are active members of a Hispanic/Latino community who work in close and direct contact with the target population in promoting values

and preventive measures. "Promotoras" are lay people who receive instruction in the art and ways of promoting safe and successful attitudes toward the more immediate and pervasive health challenges and dangers faced by the Hispanic/Latino community. They work at the grassroots level and are probably the most effective type of intermediary. Several Latin American countries have successfully experimented with this type of intermediary action.

Media Channels for Reaching Hispanic/ Latino Groups

Mass media channels offer many opportunities for reaching Hispanic/Latino audiences.

For effective delivery of messages, consider the following:

- Videos in Spanish seem particularly viable. Recent studies indicate that most Hispanic/Latino households in the United States have VCRs. The U.S. market for videos in Spanish is also rapidly expanding.
- Novelas (soap operas) are of paramount importance in modern Hispanic/Latino culture. An effort should be made to incorporate implicit prevention messages in novelas.
- Talk shows are becoming popular among Hispanic/Latino audiences.

Because repetition of a message is essential for reinforcement, ensuring that the audience receives long-term exposure to materials assumes strategic importance. But the high cost of developing materials for distribution and of their repeated exposure through mass media, especially television, should be considered before deciding to reach Hispanic/ Latino audiences through such channels. Distribution and marketing of Hispanic/Latino media materials have yet to be well defined and improved.

Evaluate the Effectiveness of Messages and Materials

The ability to pique the target population's interest is not proof that the materials are successful. To be effective, products not only must be appealing, but they must also be understood. Above all, they have to elicit some kind of action.

In testing whether the materials meet these objectives, methodologies based on social marketing approaches can be of great value:

1. Conduct preliminary formative research to determine the needs of the target population and the best means to reach this audience.

2. Develop and pretest the appropriate message and materials.

3. After disseminating and promoting the materials, conduct an evaluation to determine the results or outcomes of the prevention messages.

To assess the impact of the materials on people's daily lives and the value and relevancy of the materials to individuals and their families, ask:

- Who is using the material? Are they a part of the target group?
- How is the material being used? Is this the way it was intended to be used?
- Is the effort prompting the target audience to do anything different? If so, what? If not, why not?

Even when resources are limited, it is possible to incorporate into the evaluation plan collecting data, pretesting with focus groups, and monitoring implementation of program goals and objectives.

The evaluation methods and process selected depend not only on the resources available but also on cultural considerations. Care should be taken to build in appropriate resources for evaluation. But even greater care should be taken to select and apply evaluation methods and tools that are sensi-

tive to cultural and other factors specific to the Hispanic/Latino community. For example, designing a survey instrument that requires written responses may not be useful or effective in evaluating the results of prevention messages with recent Hispanic/Latino immigrant groups with low levels of literacy. It may also indicate a lack of cultural sensitivity by the evaluator.

Evaluation results will enable the reassessment and refinement of ongoing health communication planning efforts to ensure that the substance abuse problem prevention messages and materials developed for Hispanic/Latino audiences are increasingly relevant and more effective.

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A Key Step In Developing Prevention Materials Is To Obtain Expert and Gatekeeper Reviews, 1994.

Pretesting Is Essential; You Can Choose From Various Methods, 1994.

You Can Avoid Common Errors As You Develop Prevention Materials, 1994.

You Can Prepare Easy-To-Read Materials, 1994. Provides information on how to apply the SMOG readability formula.

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National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI), P.O. Box 2345, Rockville, MD 20852, (301) 468-2600 or (800) 729-6686, TDD (800) 487-4889. Internet World Wide Web address: http://www.health.org. Provides information on substance abuse research literature, programs, and educational materials.

National Coalition of Hispanic Health and Human Services Organizations (COSSMHO), 1030 15th Street, NW, Room 1053, Washington, DC 20005, (202) 387-5000.

National Council of La Raza, 20 F Street, NW, 2nd Floor, Washington, DC 20001, (202) 628-9600.

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This technical assistance bulletin synthesizes the discussion of a CSAP Communications Team Plans Board meeting on Developing Materials for Hispanic Audiences held June 17, 1994. The meeting participants, who included outside experts, CSAP staff, and contractors, were as follows.

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Developed and Produced by the CSAP Communications Team.

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This bulletin is one in a series developed to assist programs that are working to prevent substance abuse problems. We welcome your suggestions regarding information that may be included in future bulletins. For help in learning about your audience, developing messages and materials, and evaluating communication programs, contact the CSAP Communications Team, 7200 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 500, Bethesda, MD 20814-4820, (301) 941-8500.